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S P E E C H E S

IN

Great Britain ^K*Parliament*

P A R L I A M E N T,

RESPECTING THE

A B O L I T I O N

OF THE

A F R I C A N S L A V E T R A D E.

MAN, is to MAN the surest, deadliest foe!

YOUNG.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY D. WILLISON,

FOR THE SOCIETY INSTITUTED AT EDINBURGH, FOR
THE PURPOSE OF EFFECTING THE ABOLITION
OF THE SLAVE TRADE.

M.DCC.LXXXIX.



FOR THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES
AND THE MUSEUM OF LONDON
OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

NO subject can be more generally interesting, than that which the following pages treat of, whether considered in a political or a moral light.

The injustice and cruelty of the SLAVE TRADE, have frequently been noticed by authors, whose subject has led them to treat of the common rights of men.

The most enlightened nations of Europe, nevertheless, have still continued the inhuman traffic ;—the apparent profits resulting from the horrid commerce, stifling alike the voice of nature, and the remonstrances of reason.

If Britain has shared more deeply in the guilt of this dreadful trade than other nations, she has also the honour of being the first to declare aloud her abhorrence of it, and to invite other states, by her example, to abandon a commerce, marked throughout its whole progress by acts of unspeakable cruelty, unparalleled in the history of the most barbarous people.

To procure an abolition of the AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE, so far at least as this kingdom was concerned in it, by an act of the Legislature, a Society was formed about two years ago at London, composed of persons no less respectable by their rank in life, than for the humane and disinterested motives which actuated them.—The generous example was quickly followed in other the principal cities and towns in England; and by their unwearied labours, the hitherto impenetrable veil which screened this infernal traffic, and its hardened conductors, from universal execration, has been torn off, and such scenes of deliberate cruelty, perfidy, and murder, have been brought to light, that humanity shudders at the view, and the feeling heart shrinks inward with horror at the recital of tales of real woe, far exceeding all the tragic poet ever feigned.

But the researches of those truly honourable Associations have not terminated here:—they have been enabled to demonstrate, in the clearest manner, the national impolicy of the SLAVE TRADE, as *productive of bankruptcy to the West India planter, and as undermining our naval strength*, by destroying more seamen in one year than are lost in all our other foreign trades together in two years: hereby holding forth an unanswerable argument for its abolition, even to those with whom motives of justice, and compassion to the suffering Africans, would be pled in vain.

It behoved the Legislature maturely to deliberate, previous to its decision upon an object of so great magnitude.

—Hence,

Hence, during the last Session of Parliament, nothing more could be accomplished than a law, fixing the number of negroes to be taken aboard each slave ship of a given burden, and thereby affording some mitigation to the sufferings of the wretched passengers.

In the present Session, however, the expediency of an immediate total abolition of the Trade, undergoes a complete discussion; and from the powerful support which the question met, in its introduction before the Committee of the House of Commons on the 13th instant, the friends of humanity draw the most favourable presage of the issue.

To cherish these hopes in all who wish well to the cause, and to stimulate their further exertions, should they still be wanted, is the intention of this Publication.

Although Mr Beaufoy's Speech, and the Observations annexed to it, refer to the temporary bill passed last year, yet the arguments offered by him in support of that bill, and the Remarks on the Evidence produced in opposition to it, strengthen the general reasoning in favour of a total abolition.

The Speech of Mr Wilberforce is printed from the fullest and most correct account which any of the newspapers have given of it.—It must be remembered at the same time, that, in its present form, it is divested of all those graces of style,
elegance

elegance of language, and beauty of arrangement, which drew eulogiums from all sides of the House.

The last little tract in this publication, is inserted in justice to a Nation, with whom we have heretofore contested the palm of victory in many a bloody field,—happily now engaged with us in a more glorious rivalry.

The General Assembly of the church of Scotland did, at one of their diets last year, by a resolution entered upon their records, declare their abhorrence of the African Slave Trade, as A VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MANKIND, AND THE FEELINGS OF HUMANITY.—It were to be wished, as that Venerable Body are now sitting, they would still more publicly avow their sentiments upon this subject, by a petition to Parliament.—The ambassadors of the Prince of Peace, and Ministers of that Gospel which inspires universal philanthropy, cannot surely appear in a more honourable or consistent character, than in pleading the cause of millions of the human race;—in asking for them, neither protection nor favour, but that they may be left to the free enjoyment of the privileges they derive from the common Parent of the Universe, *WHOSE TENDER MERCIES ARE OVER ALL HIS WORKS.*

EDINBURGH, SATURDAY,

23d MAY 1789.

T N E

THE
S P E E C H
O F

Mr BEAUFOR,

TUESDAY, THE 18th JUNE 1788,

IN A
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE,
ON A

B I L L
FOR REGULATING THE
CONVEYANCE OF NEGROES
FROM

Africa to the West-Indies.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED
O B S E R V A T I O N S

ON THE
E V I D E N C E

ADDUCED AGAINST THE

B I L L.

COMMITTEE of the SOCIETY instituted
in 1787, for the Purpose of effecting the
Abolition of the SLAVE TRADE.

ALTHOUGH the act passed last session
for regulating the conveyance of negroes,
did not aim at the point to which the at-
tention of the Society has been invariably
directed, viz. The Abolition of the Slave
Trade; yet as the arguments offered in
support of the bill, and the evidence pro-
duced in opposition to it, tended greatly
to promote their design, by strengthening
the general reasoning in favour of their
great object, the Committee think them-
selves fortunate in having been able to
prevail on the members whose Speech and
Remarks follow, to permit their publica-
tion.

11 JY 63

By Order of the Committee,

G. SHARP, Chairman.

(58)

THE
S P E E C H
OF

Mr BEAUFORT;

ON TUESDAY, JUNE THE 18th,

ON A BILL FOR REGULATING THE
CONVEYANCE OF NEGROES.

THE remarks of the * noble Lord in support of the veracity of the witnesses whom the friends of the African trade have thought fit to call to your bar, I am not inclined to dispute. Their evidence is clear, the facts they have established are important, and the natural conclusions from these facts, however opposite to those which they intended should be drawn, are, in my judgment, decisive on the case. On this occasion two questions arise.

* Lord Penrhyn.

The first is—Whether in the present mode of transporting to the West Indies the negroes which are purchased in Africa, such abuses exist as require the restrictions of law?

The second is—Whether the restrictions which this bill proposes to enact will, or will not, amount to an abolition of the trade?

These are the two points to which the counsel, who pleaded this day at your bar in behalf of the African merchants, directed his principal attention, and they do in reality comprehend the whole of the business now before us.

In his arguments on the first of these points, the counsel declared that the appellation of abuse could only be given to such a mode of conveyance as is dangerous to the lives or health of the negroes. I accept his definition, narrow as it is, and shall make it the basis of my reasoning. To the question then, “ Is the present mode
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of transportation compatible with a due regard to the lives and health of the Africans," what has been the evidence at your bar?—what the language of the witnesses? They told you, that five feet in length, and sixteen inches in breadth, was as much as their practice, upon an average, allotted to each slave; that this space was all the room they could allow for the African and his irons; and that in order to accommodate him to this extent, which they described as liberal, recourse is had to every possible contrivance. In the first place, the lower deck is entirely covered with bodies: in the next, the height between the floor of that deck and the roof above (a height which they acknowledge seldom amounts to five feet eight inches, and sometimes does not exceed four feet) is divided by a platform, which is also covered with bodies. Thus the distance from the floor on which some of the Africans are laid, to the platform on which others are spread, is but two feet in many cases, and but two feet and a few inches in the rest; and from the

platform to the upper deck, which constitutes the roof, there is but a similar space. The same ingenuity of package and perfection of contrivance is employed, according to the witnesses account, in filling every other part of the vessel, in which a human body can be stowed. Such is the mode of conveyance.

Now what, from the evidence of the witnesses at the bar, (an evidence given with reluctance, on a cross examination, and therefore of decisive credibility) is the effect of that conveyance on the lives and healths both of the negroes and the seamen? "I do confess" (says one of the witnesses) "that when I was master of the Tartar, I lost in one voyage a third of my seamen, and 120 negroes, which was also a third of the whole." Was this the total of your loss? "I cannot say it was; 12 negroes perished by an accident: they were drowned." Had you no other mortality except that of the 120 negroes, and that of the 12? "No other upon the voyage: but I lost between

" 20 and 30 negroes before I left the coast."—Thus it appears, that 120 Africans, being a third of the whole, died upon the voyage, that 12 more were drowned, and that from 20 to 30 more were devoured by different diseases before his cargo was completed. Such is the evidence of one of the witnesses at your bar ; yet the very counsel who called that witness, asserts that no abuses deserving the notice of Parliament, none which endanger the lives, or affect the health, of the negroes, exist in the African trade. The counsel indeed, who is paid by his clients, and who does not conceive that his honour is pledged to the truth of his arguments, or his character concerned in the justice of his cause, may think himself at liberty to contradict the common feelings, and affront the common sense of mankind. But I cannot persuade myself that such of the members of this House as have hitherto opposed the bill will venture on the same desperate assertions. On this point of mortality, what is the language of the other witnesses ? Though

interested in the trade, and parties against the bill, their confession is, that of the negroes of the *Windward Coast*, who are men of the strongest constitutions of any which Africa affords, No less, on an average, than five in each hundred perish in the voyage, a voyage it must be remembered of but *five weeks* continuance. In a twelvemonth then, what must be the proportion of the dead? no less than 43 in every hundred; seventeen times the usual rate of mortality: for all the estimates of life suppose, and Dr Price expressly declares, that, except in very particular situations (of which, as we find from the history of Captain Cook's voyages, the sea is not one) no more than a fortieth of the people, or two and a half in the hundred, die within the space of a year.—Such then is the comparison.—In the ordinary course of nature, the number of persons (including those in age and infancy, the weakest periods of existence) who perish in the course of a twelvemonth, is at the rate of but two and a half in a hundred; but in an African voyage, notwithstanding

notwithstanding the old are excluded, and few infants are admitted; notwithstanding the people are in the firmest period of life, the list of deaths presents an annual mortality of forty-three in a hundred. It presents this mortality even in vessels from the *Windward Coast* of Africa, but in those of *Bonny, Benin, and the Calabars*, from whence the greatest proportion of the slaves are brought, the mortality is increased by a variety of causes, of which the greater length of the voyage is one, and is said to be twice as large; which supposes that in every hundred the deaths annually amount to no less than eighty-six. Yet even the former comparatively low mortality, of which the counsel speaks with satisfaction as a proof of the kind and compassionate treatment of the slaves, even this indolent and lethargic destruction, gives to the march of death seventeen times its usual speed. It is a destruction which if general but for *ten years* would depopulate the world, blast the purposes of its creation, and extinguish the human race. After these proofs of
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the horrors of an African voyage, what shall we think of the persons who have the confidence to tell you, that the conveyance of the Africans from their native land is a mercantile concern with which you should not interfere; and while they presumptuously caution you against an officious intermeddling, likewise tell you that you cannot be judges of the subject? " You form (says the counsel) your opinion of the feelings of the negroes by those that belong to yourselves; a mistaken and inapplicable test: for though in their situation you might be miserable, yet to them the circumstances of the voyage are not inconsistent with comfort or happiness." Stronger still upon this point, is the language of the witnesses. We, whose feelings have never known the hardening influence of an African sun, naturally thought, that if a man, be his complexion what it may, be suddenly torn from his family and friends, and be violently wrenched from his native soil, his suffering must be great; and that if to these afflictions be added the perpetual

perpetual loss of freedom; his misery must be intense. "Just the reverse" (say the witnesses); "the direct contrary is the fact; the voyage from Africa is the "happiest period of his life." I should almost be tempted to conclude from the evidence at the bar, that the fetters on the hands of the Africans, and the irons on their feet, are intended to check the wild expressions of tumultuous and frantic joy, rather than to counteract the gloomy purposes of despair. Some of us imagined, that when to the burning atmosphere of the torrid zone, is added the suffocating heat of numbers crowded into a narrow space, the suffering must be dreadful: but here again we are mistaken; so much so indeed, that the counsel treated the very idea as ridiculously delicate and finical; and the witnesses say, that the additional warmth is the very thing which the Africans desire; they accept it as a boon; they solicit it as an enjoyment. One would think from the evidence at the bar, and from the arguments of the counsel upon it, that the solid pestilence,

silence, the thick contagion, the substantial rottenness of an African ship is congenial to the constitution, and exhilarating to the spirits of a negro. Could any thing add to the indignation we feel at *such a trade, conducted in such a way*, it would be the *preposterous arguments by which that trade is defended*.—Among the gentlemen who oppose this bill there are some who think its operations unfriendly to our West India settlements; yet even they, when they heard from the witnesses (whose testimony often acquired additional strength from the reluctance with which it was given) the ravages of this remorseless trade, even they must, I am confident, have felt an earnest wish that the necessity of the traffic did not exist. May I then be permitted to point out to the West India settlements, not presumptuously, but with anxious and ardent wishes for their welfare, a line of conduct that would soon supersede the necessity of the negro traffic, and promote, at the same time, the interest of the planters? I think with them, that in all regulations for the remedy of evils

evils of great magnitude, and of long establishment, especially of those, with the existence of which the rights of property are blended, the spirit of reform should be guided by a temperate and well advised zeal, that considers what is *attainable* as well as what is *desireable*, and confines its efforts to *practicable good*. I also think with them, that in all such regulations of the African trade for negroes as are not, like those of the present bill, confined to the mode of their conveyance, the provincial legislatures of our West India settlements should undertake the conduct of the business. Now if, as the wisest maxims of policy suggest, those legislatures should impose a tax on every negro imported, and should grant a countervailing premium on creole negroes, born in the West Indies, and produced in a healthy state at the age of ten years, the necessity of new importations would speedily be removed. Especially if in aid of these regulations (the efficacy of which might otherwise be retarded by negroes illicitly imported) a register of slaves should be established, and
a pro-

a provision made, that all who are not enrolled shall be absolutely free. To the provincial assemblies who shall thus destroy the asserted necessity, and therefore the existence of the traffic in human beings, immortal honour will be due; and still more ample will be their fame, should they add to the liberal policy of this measure the wise and generous expedient of raising their negroes from a state of slavery to that of regulated vassalage: they will then be revered as the distinguished instructors of their country, and as the friends and benefactors of human kind.—But I have wandered too far from the immediate subject of debate.—In the outset of my argument I observed, that the counsel has not only attempted to shew, that the sufferings of the negroes in their passage are merely ideal, and the mortality too trifling for notice, but that the present bill, in professing to regulate, would really abolish the trade. With what success he has attempted to establish his first proposition I have already examined; the other remains to be considered.

The bill proposes to enact, that the number of Africans who shall be carried in any vessel, shall be restricted by a rule; that is founded on the joint consideration; of the size of the vessel, and the accommodations with which it is furnished. A more reasonable proposition, or one that, in imposing a restraint on the eagerness of avarice, more effectually consults the interests of the merchant, is not perhaps to be found in the polity of nations. Yet these provisions the witnesses object to as ruinous to their trade: For the French, say they, our rivals in the African commerce, will be subject to no restraint; and as the merchant best understands the nature of his own concern, and the mode of conducting it to advantage, *their freedom* opposed to *our restraint*, will give them an undoubted superiority; a superiority that will be rendered still more decisive by the bounty which the French government bestows.—Such are the arguments of the counsel and the witnesses.

To their first remark, “ That the mer-
chant

"chant best understands the means of
 "commercial profit," my answer is, That
 avarice, though always an eager, is not
 always a clear-sighted and well-judging
 passion. For under its government the
 probability of exorbitant loss is often risked
 on the slightest prospect of exorbitant gain;
 and therefore it is, that in the African
 trade, a lottery of the worst species, the
 rules of prudence are often as much ne-
 glected as the rights of humanity. On
 this principle then, there is reason to be-
 lieve, that the present bill will not, on the
 whole, be injurious to the merchant; but
 even the contrary supposition is not a suf-
 ficient argument against it; for the Legis-
 lature is not bound to uphold commercial
 profit at the expence of humanity and
 justice. "But the French, our ancient
 "and inveterate rivals (says the counsel)
 "will possess themselves of the trade which
 "you relinquish, and will thus succeed to
 "one of the principal branches of your
 "naval strength, as well as of your com-
 "merce." Does then the counsel con-
 ceive us so ill informed on the subject, as
 not

not to know that the trade to Africa has invariably proved, not the nursery, but the grave of the British seamen; and that the number of our countrymen, who are yearly sacrificed to this dreadful traffic, constitutes such a waste of life as no commercial gain is able to compensate? In this view of the subject then, we have no reason to dread the industry and enterprising spirit of the French: but should we admit, that, in a mercantile view, the national value of the African trade is such as the counsel has described, what proofs has he brought, that in consequence of the present bill that trade will be given to our rivals? Is he not aware, that of the 30,000 Africans whom our ships annually convey, more than one half is sold for the use of our own West India settlements? That moiety, therefore, if we choose to retain the trade, is beyond the reach of hazard; for, admitting that the restraints proposed should diminish the number of negroes transported in each vessel, and that the price required by the merchant

for those whom he does convey, should, for this reason, be somewhat raised, it follows indeed, that the cost to the British planter may be greater than at present; but it does not follow, nor is it in any respect true, that the merchants of France can seize upon the commerce. Nothing is in question then but that part of the trade, the least considerable of the two, which is carried on for the supply of the foreign plantations in the West Indies; and even that part of it, if the advantage of a reduced mortality be weighed, is exposed to no other diminution than that which, independently of this bill, may arise from the exorbitant premiums which, at this time, are given by the French government for the encouragement of its trade to Africa.

Hitherto I have argued on the supposition of the counsel, that the trade to Africa will continue to receive the countenance and protection of the French: but there is reason to think, that, let the ultimate

mate decision of the British legislature on this hideous traffic be what it may, its existence among the French will speedily be abolished. Already the best and most respectable part of their great community, all their philosophers, all their men of science, all their literary men, are earnest in their wishes for its extinction ; and two of the greatest ministers her government has ever known, Turgot and Neckar, have recorded their fixed abhorrence of its cruelty and guilt. A noble lord, whose judgment on this subject is undoubtedly the reverse of theirs, smiles, I observe, at the mention of literary men ; but allow me to tell him, that their influence is great in a country *in which the empire of opinion is all things* : already have we seen them accomplishing more difficult events than the abolition of a traffic, which is not less disgusting to the reason, than hateful to the feelings of our nature ; a traffic which exists but by human suffering, and the gains of which are constantly polluted with blood. Has the noble lord forgotten the

success with which, in the persons of the two great men I have mentioned, they opposed the authority of science to the sternness of power, and the rectitude of philosophy to the corruptions of a court? Does he not know that they have actually effected what none but themselves have at any time ventured to attempt; for within the domains of a cruel religion, *they alone* have erected an altar to Mercy? Does he not know *that they alone* have instructed their countrymen to assert their violated rights, and reclaim their ancient constitution? Does he not know that *to them* it is owing, that at this very hour, to the astonishment of Europe, the voice of Freedom is heard in the inmost recesses of the palace? Again I repeat, that let *Britain* determine as she will, the guilt and infamy of this traffic will not long be endured in *France*.

Thus I have considered the various objections that have been stated to the bill, and am ashamed to reflect that it could be
 necessary

necessary to speak so long in defence of such a cause: For what, after all, is asked by the proposed regulation?—*On the part of the Africans*, the whole of their purport is, that those whom you allow to be robbed of all things *but life*, may not unnecessarily and wantonly be deprived of *life too*.—*On the part of your seamen* all that is suggested is, that after they have hazarded their lives in your service, and fought the battles of their country, you would not, when poverty compels them to accept a birth in an African ship, allow them to be exposed to useless danger, or be consigned to unnecessary death.

To the honour, to the wisdom, to the feelings of the House, I now make my appeal, perfectly confident that you will not *tolerate as senators* a traffic, which *as men*, you *shudder to contemplate*; and that you will not take upon yourselves the responsibility of this waste of existence.—To the memory of former parliaments the horrors of this traffic will be an eternal

reproach ; yet *former parliaments* have not known, as *you*, on the clearest evidence, now know, the dreadful nature of this trade. Should you reject this bill, no exertion of yours to rescue from oppression the suffering inhabitants of your eastern empire ; no records of the prosperous state to which, after a long and unsuccessful war, you have restored your native land ; no proofs, however splendid, that, under your guidance, Great Britain has recovered her rank, and is again the arbitress of nations, will save your names from the stigma of everlasting dishonour. The broad mantle of this one infamy will cover with substantial blackness the radiance of your glory, and change to feelings of abhorrence the present admiration of the world.— Pardon the supposition of so impossible an event. I know that justice and mercy are the constant attributes of your character, and that the lustre of their brightness is such as will endure for ever.

OBSER-

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

EVIDENCE

GIVEN AT THE BAR OF THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

1788.

IT was the wish of those who opposed the bill in question to prove, 1st, That it was *unnecessary*; by shewing, that the present mode of conveying the negroes is well adapted to preserve not only life, but health—and 2dly, That it would be *ruin*, not *regulation* to the trade, if the ships should be restrained from taking at least two full grown slaves, or three small ones, to each ton of their burthen.—As much

exertion was used, and many witnesses were called, to establish the truth of these assertions, it may at first appear strange that the bill should have been passed without the production of any evidence professedly in support of it, except the report of Mr Parrey, who was sent down to Liverpool to examine the vessels employed in the trade: But all surprize will immediately cease, on a slight attention to the allegations of its opponents; the majority of which made directly against their own cause; and of those which seemed to favour it, many were positively contradicted by Mr Parrey's testimony, and more by their own.

The degree of credit due to their assertions would be most completely ascertained by accurately attending to the whole of the business: but a tolerable judgment may be formed from a few specimens relating to one point, which, for this purpose, more than on account of their intrinsic importance, are here introduced.

In support of their first position, one of the witnesses alleged,

That the African slave ships are *peculiarly constructed* for carrying a large number of persons, having small holds, and much space between decks—that the height between decks deemed sufficient to admit of platforms *, is five feet four inches and upwards—that vessels under the burthen of 200 tons, in general have not platforms; and that those which have them not, take fewer slaves in proportion than those which are furnished with them.

On the contrary, Mr Parrey's account informs us,

That of 26 vessels employed in the

* Platforms are a kind of shelves about six feet broad, erected against the ship's sides between decks, and projecting horizontally toward the middle of the ship—the height is thus divided in two, and after the whole floor of the deck is covered with slaves, they are laid in a second tier on these shelves almost from stem to stern.

trade

trade which he saw, ten only were built expressly for the purpose—that of the nine he measured, the average height between decks was but 5 feet 2 inches—of the four smallest, 4 feet 8 inches only—that these four were under 200 tons, and yet all had platforms, either wholly or in part—and that the only two vessels in which they were partly deficient, had cargoes fully equal in number to the general average, by their own report; though one of them was but 4 feet 2 inches high between decks,

Any comment is unnecessary.

With respect to the accommodation of the slaves and crew when on board, from comparing the different relations, the truth appears to be nearly as follows, viz.

That the whole space between decks is most frequently appropriated to the full-grown slaves, who are usually kept below 15 or 16 hours of the 24 during the time they

they are on board—often in rainy weather, not brought up for two or three days or more ; which, when the ship is full, is in the highest degree distressing and unwholesome—that the men are in irons as long as they remain on the coast, i. e. for six weeks or six months as it may happen—that the boys and girls are scattered about the ship, in the cabin, * fore-castle, or deck, or on a kind of platforms suspended over the deck—that the usual lodging of the seamen is on deck also, defended from the weather only by temporary awnings, or the platforms above-mentioned.—Much was said to induce the belief of a particular apartment being allotted to the sick ; but by the variety of inconsistent accounts respecting it, the fact was rendered extremely dubious, if not totally incredible. As to the space actually allowed to each individual, this being the point on which they were most guarded, it was found impossible to obtain decisive answers upon it, either as to fact or opi-

* Very few ships have any.

nion.—

nion.—It was not however difficult to discover that the only general rule of stowage is, to place them as close as they can lie, both on the floor of the deck, and on the platforms.

Of the mortality attached to this horrid traffic, what must be thought, when we find it stated as the opinion of *their own* witnesses, corroborated by *their own* accounts of 35 voyages mentioned in the evidence, that the average, *during the middle passage only*, amounts to 6 per cent. ? Of about 40,000 negroes, therefore, who are annually dragged away from Africa in British ships, we learn *from their carriers*, that *not less* than 2400 perish during a voyage of six or eight weeks. In addition to which number must be taken, those lost by disease and accident during the stay of the ships on the coast, and those who die after their arrival in the islands of disorders contracted on board.*—

* It is a fact in evidence that three or four per cent. often die in the interval between the ships reporting and landing their cargoes.

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The indignant sorrow which such an account must excite in every humane mind, is yet aggravated by the farther information; that by a proper attention to all favourable circumstances, much of this might be avoided; for in several of the voyages alluded to, the loss has not exceeded one per cent.—which affords the strongest presumption that this enormous destruction of the species is no less unnecessary than inhuman, and is greatly if not intirely owing to the improper modes of stowage and treatment, which were at first suggested by avarice, are supported by established usage only, and can be practised by none who are not devoid of the common feelings of humanity.

Incredible however as it may seem, it was gravely asserted by some of the witnesses, that from the usual practice in these points, no inconvenience whatever was found to arise; that the degrees of sickness and mortality were wholly unconnected with, and independent

pendent on it; nay even, that 450 slaves, packed in a vessel of 200 tons, would have an equal chance for life and health with 200 in another ship of similar dimensions; and this, under all the known circumstances of confinement in rainy weather, equinoctial heats with a very moderate allowance of water, and of their being subject to a variety of inflammatory and contagious disorders. To combat by *argument*, assertions so repugnant to the common sense of mankind, so *necessarily untrue*, would be to exceed their own absurdity; but if any refutation be wanting, a most complete one may be collected from others of their own witnesses, who inform us, in direct opposition to these fictions, that they always endeavour to procure fast-sailing vessels to shorten the voyages, because the negroes are liable to all those disorders which usually arise among those crowded together in ships; and, beyond these, to *more* inconveniences than other people. That the space in which they are stowed

does,

does, no doubt, operate in some degree; that it would be absurd to pretend that a voyage with a great number would be quite so healthy as one with but few; that small ships are most healthy, because they are less time on the coast, and have fewer on board; and that when ships short of their usual compliment have appeared equally sickly, the reason has been, that the deficiency in their numbers arose from a competition in the market, or a small supply of slaves, by which they were detained a longer time on the coast in completing their cargo: and lastly, from the account they delivered in of several voyages, we are enabled not only to establish the general position, that, *ceteris paribus*, the mortality will be greater as the allowance of space is less; but we also find that the principle applies to almost every particular instance with an exactness scarcely to be credited. By the same authority we are told, that the loss of seamen is about 10 per cent. in each voyage. Were this the utmost extent of it,

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the consideration would be truly alarming : but we know with deep regret, that, even exclusive of peculiar fatalities, the general average loss is far greater ; of which, the proof is but too certain.

On the second point to which the evidence was directed, viz. ‘ That the proposed regulation would be in fact abolition,’ it will be found unnecessary to dwell long. Of every witness it was asked nearly in the same words—‘ Is it your opinion that the trade can be carried on *at all*, if less than two full-grown slaves be allowed to a ton, three small ones to be reckoned as two only?’ The uniform answer from every one was, ‘ *That it could not* ; that any restriction below that point, would *infallibly be abolition.*’

After these *positive* and *reiterated* assertions, it will surely be thought extraordinary that here again, they should have furnished every needful document for their
own

own confutation.—For in examining into the particulars which they produced of 19 vessels, 14 of them *under 200 tons*, it appeared that of the whole number, five only had cargoes equal to the proportion they state as *necessary to the existence of the trade* (viz. two grown slaves to a ton)—and the other 14 fell so much short of it as that *the average of the whole 19* was but $1\frac{1}{2}$ —or 10 per cent. below this their *lowest standard*!—When the assertion and the proof are thus at variance, which would the gentlemen wish us to believe?

I shall not on this occasion dilate on the general impolicy, the fundamental injustice, the universal inhumanity, or the particular barbarities which are either interwoven into the very constitution, or consequent on the practice of this nefarious traffic: but before I conclude, I cannot refrain from making two reflections which immediately arise from this particular view of the subject.—Allowing every slave to *be obtained* by the least objection-

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able mode, I suppose it will not be contended that the right in him so acquired extends either to deprivation of life, or to wanton ill treatment; or that such slave can be considered otherwise than as perfectly innocent with respect to his purchaser. Is there then no crime in subjecting thousands and millions of such persons to a confinement, loathsome, rigorous, and destructive; in comparison with which, that of a felon in England is salubrious and easy——of whose fatal severity it is at once an irrefragable proof, and a dreadful illustration, that its continuance but for a single year, would send at least half its wretched objects to the grave? This is surely a very serious consideration; and there is yet another perhaps not less important: Those who possess but a moderate share of that philanthropy which embraces the interests and happiness of human kind, are apt to wonder how the

* For a more particular explanation of the mode of stowing the slaves, the Reader is referred to the Plan and Description of a Slave Ship, lately published.

idea,

idea, at once so barbarous and so degrading, of trafficking in our own species, could be endured among any but savages. How pernicious and debasing then, must be the influence of this practice on the noblest dispositions of the heart, when, in this enlightened age and country, persons whom affluence deprives of the plea of necessity, and who cannot without insult be supposed uneducated in the principles of moral duty, can not only persevere without remorse in a trade, the evils of which they both occasion and confess, but can defend it without shame; and exhibit in that defence, with equal coolness, accounts of the average *profit*, or the average *mortality*, of a voyage. Mortality, not of sheep or oxen, but of *men*, bought for their profit, and dying perhaps through their neglect!—And can do all this, apparently *unconscious*, certainly *regardless*, of the grossness of the outrage on the common sense and common feelings of mankind.

The first of these is the fact that the
 world is not a homogeneous mass, but
 is divided into many different parts,
 each of which has its own peculiar
 characteristics and its own special
 interests. This is true of the different
 nations, of the different religions, and
 of the different classes of society.
 The second fact is that the world is
 constantly changing, and that the
 changes are taking place at a rapid
 rate. This is true of the different
 nations, of the different religions, and
 of the different classes of society.
 The third fact is that the world is
 full of contradictions, and that the
 contradictions are often very glaring.
 This is true of the different nations,
 of the different religions, and of the
 different classes of society.

D E B A T E S
IN THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS,

RELATIVE TO THE
Abolition of the Slave Trade.

WEDNESDAY, 13th MAY 1789.

MR WILBERFORCE moved the order of the day, for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, to take into consideration the petitions that had been presented against the Slave Trade.

The order of the day being read,

Mr *Wilberforce* moved, That the report of the Committee of Privy Council be re-

ferred to the, said Committee : That the acts passed in the islands relative to slaves be referred to the said Committee : That the evidence adduced last year on the slave trade be referred to the said Committee : That the petitions last session offered against the slave trade be referred to the said Committee ; and that the accounts presented to the House in the last and present session, relative to the exports and imports to Africa be referred to the said Committee.

These motions being all agreed to, the House immediately resolved itself into a Committee of the whole House, (Sir William Dolben in the Chair.)

Mr *Wilberforce* began one of the most animated, perspicuous, methodical, and ably argued speeches ever heard on a copious and comprehensive subject, with declaring, that when he considered how much discussion the subject he was about to explain to the Committee had occasioned, not only in that House, but throughout the kingdom,

dom, and throughout Europe; when he considered, that through the whole of the business, he had courted and anxiously solicited enquiry; when he considered the extent and importance of its object, the variety of interests involved in it, and the consequences that might be the result, he owned he had been filled with apprehensions, lest a subject of such magnitude, and a cause of so much weight, should suffer from the weakness of its advocate: but when he recollected, that in the progress of the enquiries he had been under the necessity of making, he had every where been received with that candour that convinced him that his motives were considered in the most favourable view, and that, however they might then differ, they were all likely to agree in the end; he had dismissed his apprehensions, and marched forward with a firmer step, in the cause of justice, of humanity, and of freedom.

He lamented that the subject had excited so much warmth, and feared that they came ill prepared to treat it with impartiality.

tiality. He declared he himself came forward with the greatest coolness, and wished all heat to be abated, that the subject might be entered upon calmly: He therefore challenged a fair and cool discussion of the motion he should have the honour of making. The motion he meant to offer, was perfectly reconcileable to political expediency, and at the same time to national humanity. It was by no means a party question, nor would it, he hoped, be so considered: he was convinced in his own mind, that in the end it would be found serviceable to all parties, and to the best interests of the country. He came not forward to accuse the West India planter; he came not forward to accuse the Liverpool merchants; he came forward to accuse no one: He came forward to confess himself guilty, for the purpose of shewing to that House, that if guilt any where existed, which ought to be remedied, they were all of them participators in it. In going through the business, he said he would touch slightly only on some of the points
relative

relative to the trade, and call the attention of the House to the leading features of that traffic. He conceived it to be unnecessary to detain them long on the subject of the trade on the coast of Africa; it was well known, that people were sold there as goods, and that considerable numbers of Africans were continually conveyed away from their country by owners of British vessels: The question then was, Which way came they by them?—In answer to that question, he declared, that the report of the Privy Council, which was then on the table, afforded evidence the most satisfactory and conclusive. His Majesty's Ministers had instituted an enquiry of great extent; and, on a studious examination of their report, he had found many things in it that confirmed every proposition that he had maintained before, and which he had taken from information of the best authority, and from every history he had read: but it was unnecessary to quote either the Report or History. Plain reason and common sense must point out
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how the poor Africans were obtained : Africa was a country divided under many kings, under many governments, under many laws ; in many parts the princes were despotic, and others governed with law maintained to a certain degree ; men were considered merely as goods and property, and as such subject to plunder in the same manner as property in other despotic countries. The kings and princes of that unfortunate country were naturally fond of our commodities, and to obtain them by the captivity and sale of their countrymen, they waged war on each other, and ravaged their own country, when they could find no pretence for quarrelling with their neighbouring sovereigns and their subjects. In their courts of law many poor wretches who were ignorant were condemned ; and to obtain a sufficient number of slaves, thousands were kidnapped, and torn from their families and their country, and sent into slavery. All this, he said, was recorded in every history of Africa, and was
now

now verified by the report on the table. Look to the reign of Henry the Eighth, and it would be found that the same convictions and the same penalties follow conviction. The kings in Africa did not engage in wars, like the kings of Europe, for glory: they engaged in war for the purpose of obtaining what we had made their necessities. The cruelty of those engaged in the inhuman traffic of procuring slaves he painted in a strong light, and said, the first thing he recollected by way of exemplifying these people being made slaves was, the celebrated tragedy at Calabar, where two large African villages having been some time at war, at length made peace, which was to have been ratified by intermarriages: this, he said, from the best authority, appeared to have been defeated by the cruel machinations of our people, who seeing the trade must stop, again sowed dissention between the villages, set one against the other, fought alternately for each, and massacred and enslaved the inhabitants of both.

both. Tragical and shocking as this transaction might appear, there was not a single history of Africa to be read, in which such scenes were not related. The gentlemen, he said, who defended this trade, were warped and blinded by their interests, and would not be convinced of the miseries they were daily heaping on their fellow-creatures. By their conduct they had placed the inhabitants of Africa in a worse state than that of the most barbarous and savage nation; they had destroyed what ought to be the bond of union and safety; they had rendered the whole country one scene of discord and anarchy; they had set kings against their subjects; had set subjects against each other; had rendered every private family miserable, and created one general scene of disunion and despair. When these people were separated from all they loved, he had thought that he had come to an end of the sufferings of the poor Africans. He had vainly imagined, that when men, with affections
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and feelings like to our own, were torn from their country, and every thing dear to them, that their sufferings, would have ceased, and that on their passage to their place of destination, they would have had their sufferings alleviated, and been treated as human beings. The sad reverse was the case, and it was not in his power to impress the House with what he felt; the description of their conveyance was impossible : *so much misery condensed in so little room*, so much affliction added to misery, that it appeared to be an attempt, by boldly suffering, to deprive them of the feelings of their minds. Six hundred, linked together, trying to get rid of each other, and crammed in a close vessel, with every object that was nauseous and disgusting ; with pestilence, disease, and despair, in such a situation as to render it impossible to add any thing more to human misery : Yet, shocking as this description must be felt to be by every man, it had been described by several witnesses from Liverpool as a comfortable conveyance.

conveyance. Mr Norris had painted the accommodation of a Slave ship in the most flowing terms ; he had represented it in a manner, that would have baffled his attempts at praise of the most luxurious scenes : “ The Slaves, according to his account, were fumigated with frankincense and lime-water ; instruments of music were employed to amuse them ; the *song* and the *dance*, he had said, were *promoted* ; the women were employed in weaving fanciful ornaments for their hair ; games of chance were encouraged ; their food was alternately of their own country, and European ; and they were indulged in all their little humours, and kept in the utmost spirits.” Another person had said, “ the sailors were flogged out of the hearing of the Africans, lest it should depress their spirits.” He wished not to say that such descriptions were wilful misrepresentations ; if they were not, it proved that prejudice was capable of spreading a film over the eyes thick enough to occasion total blindness. Other accounts, however,

however, and from men of the greatest veracity, made it appear, that instead of apartments for those poor wretches, instead of those comfortable conveniences above described, they were placed in niches, and along the decks in such a manner that it is impossible for any one to pass among them, however careful he might be, without treading upon them; and Sir George Yonge had testified, that in a Slave ship, on which he went on board, and which had not completed her cargo by two hundred and fifty, instead of the scent of frankincense being perceptible to the nostrils, the stench was intolerable: the allowance of water was so deficient, that the Slaves were frequently found gasping for life, and almost suffocated; and the *pulse* which they were favoured with as a luxury of their own country, was absolutely *English horse beans*. As Mr Norris had said the *song* and *dance* was *promoted*, he could not suffer it to pass without acquainting the House with the meaning of the word *promoted*, as there used. The way

way the *song* and the *dance* were *promoted*, was by severe whipping, when the poor wretches would not take voluntary exercise; their dances and their songs afforded them so much merriment, that the moment they were ceased to be promoted, tears, sighs, and melancholy succeeded.

After expatiating on the miseries of the passage, Mr Wilberforce noticed the deaths, and the loss thereby consequent on the whole cargo; he entered into a minute statement of the losses by death, which, he said, amounted to no less than between fifty and sixty out of every hundred taken from Africa: He declared, the average loss on the middle passage to be rather more than an eighth of the whole, or twelve and a half per cent. four and a half loss from entering the ports of their destination, to the discharge of their cargoes; and upwards of thirty-three in the hundred lost in seasoning.

Having got thus far, Mr Wilberforce said, he determined to proceed, whatever might be the consequence: When he saw the

the ruin the trade was productive of in Africa, he declared, he felt himself impelled to go forward. He feared to go back. The Gentlemen who honoured him with their conference on the subject had said, with emphasis, " it was their Acts of Parliament which lead the African slave traders to such practices." It was their statutes, calculated to ruin them, for doing that which they had in the first instance induced them to do.

After much elucidatory observation on his motives and his conduct, Mr Wilberforce proceeded to enquire, why the blacks, naturally prolific, decreased in the West Indies, which, he said, he had endeavoured to ascertain as far as possible. The first thing it became necessary to enquire about, was the mortality of the blacks in the West Indies, and why, in a climate as good as their own, such a decrease should have existed as to render continual importations necessary. The first great cause he stated to be the disproportion of males to females, there being upon an

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average five males to three females. The next cause he stated to be the sad condition in which, he learned from surgeons, they were brought on shore, made up for the market by astringents, ischuretics, washes, mercurial ointments and repelling drugs. There were, he said, many other causes, excessive labour, their not being properly and sufficiently fed, their universal dissoluteness of morals, and hard and rigorous treatment. Every one of these causes of decrease, he discussed with great minuteness, and said, they each of them admitted of a remedy; they might be better clothed, they might be less worked, and better treated. Mr Wilberforce entered into a long statement, shewing that these remedies had been increasing in practice, and, as they had increased, the decrease of slaves had in an equal proportion lessened: by such measures he proved, that the decrease of slaves in Jamaica had lessened in so great a degree, that from the year 1774 to the present year, the decrease was not quite one in an

an hundred, and that in fact they were at present in a state of increase. He stated the islands of Barbadoes, of Nevis, of Antigua, and the Bermudas, to be, like Jamaica, lessening their decrease, and holding forth an evident and reasonable expectation of a speedy state of increase. If Gentlemen, he said, should agree with him that these accounts were authentic, he was confident that they would agree with him that by good usage the slaves would increase, and that there was no farther need of importation and a consequent waste of the human species. He entered into argument to shew that those who argued against the motion, argued falsely on their own interests: He contended that, by fewer hands, the West Indies might be cultivated to greater advantage to the proprietors of plantations, and of this country, by the produce of cinnamon, coffee, and cocoa, than by sugars: the produce of the plantations, he said, might also be considerably increased, with less hands than were at present em-

ployed, by the introduction of agriculture-machines: He quoted Mr Long, to prove, that the plough, little used in the West Indies, did the service of 100 slaves, and caused the same ground to produce three hogheads of sugar, which cultivated by slaves would produce but two.

Mr Wilberforce then took notice of the conduct of the merchants of Liverpool, who last year declared it was a losing trade at two slaves to a ton, and yet pursued it when restricted to five to three tons, which they said would ruin them. He believed it was a losing adventure in the same manner as the lottery was a losing adventure, in which some individuals gained a fortune, while others who might purchase a considerable part of the lottery would be sure to lose, and in which, though all knew it to be a losing adventure, many were very ready to engage.

The gentlemen of Liverpool had stated the slave trade to be of so much importance, that its abolition would ruin them, as its increase and success had raised them.

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He would not believe that Liverpool either was raised, or depended for its consequence on the success of the slave trade; the whole outward-bound tonnage of that import, not being less than 160,000 or 170,000 tons, while the export tonnage from that port for the African trade was not more than 12,000 or 13,000. Liverpool, he was sure, owed its greatness to other and very different causes, not to the paltry consideration, in so inconsiderable a number out of 160 or 170,000, as 12,000. He was warranted, he said, by the Liverpool gentlemen themselves to declare the trade to be a losing one; and he was convinced, if they would open their eyes, that they would be unanimous for the abolition of the trade.

Another point he could not pass over without particularly calling the attention of the House to it. Many had asserted the effect it would have on our seamen, and the dangerous consequences that would result to our marine, by the abolition of the slave trade; many had gone so far as

to assert, that it would be the total ruin of our navy, and the increase of that of our rivals. For an answer to those assertions, he referred to what he considered to be the most valuable part of the report, and for which they were, and the country at large, indebted to the praiseworthy and indefatigable exertions of Mr Clarkson. By the report, it appeared, that instead of the African trade being a nursery for British seamen, it was their grave: by that report it was evident that more seamen died in that trade, than in the whole remaining trade of the country; out of 910 sailors employed in the African trade, 216 died in the year, while, upon a fair average of the same number of men employed in the trades to the East and West Indies, to Petersburg, Newfoundland, and Greenland, no more than 87 had died.

Mr Wilberforce next read an extract of a letter from Governor Parry, of Barbadoes, to Lord Sydney, Secretary of State, in which the Governor declared, that he could no longer contain himself, on account

count of the cruelties he knew to be committed by the slave traders on the coast of Africa, and the ill-treatment that the British sailors experienced in those vessels ; great numbers of whom, when the slave ships arrived in the Windward Islands, and no danger to be apprehended of insurrections by the slaves, were frequently quarrelled with by their Captains, and discharged, where they were left to perish by sickness, or to enter into foreign service, and be for ever lost to their country. Governor Parry concluded by declaring, that the enormities of the trade were so great as to demand the immediate interference of the Legislature.

After making some observations upon the ill treatment received by sailors in this trade, Mr Wilberforce answered the argument urged against the abolition on account of the danger of our rivals pursuing the trade, if we gave it up. On that subject, he said, he had no fears at all. In the first place, he could not calumniate the French so much as to imagine that

they would take what we gave up, and be guilty of entering upon a trade like that, which entailed misery on many thousands : if they did engage in it, they would even then serve us : because if he was most powerful who has the longest purse, and money being the sinew of war, if they laid out their capital in little service to themselves, it must consequently be of service to us ; and the cheapness of our manufactures would force them to buy of us what they wanted for the African market. Their carrying it on would not justify us in doing so ; for, on that principle, the most atrocious acts of violence and iniquity might be justified. It was not likely, he said, that they would carry it on, but that, on the contrary, from the Minister at present at the head of their finance (Mons. Necker) it would be discountenanced and abolished there : the earnest wish of that able Minister to have a trade so disgraceful to human nature totally abolished and destroyed, stood publicly recorded. Mr Wilberforce said, he was al-

so happy to relate to the Committee an anecdote of the present King of France, which proved that he was a friend to the abolition ; for, being petitioned to abolish a society formed for the annihilation of the slave trade, his Majesty answered, that he would not, and was happy to hear that so humane a society was formed in his dominions. Hence he was convinced that France would not so destroy her honour and her character as a great nation, to carry on the trade.

He imputed the backwardness of cultivation in Africa to slavery, from which he said it would speedily emerge if the cause was taken away. Europe, three or four centuries back, was in many parts as barbarous as Africa at present ; and had as bad practices as the Africans were charged with : for what would be said, if so late down as the middle of the thirteenth century, he should be able to find a parallel to the practice of Africa, and to prove, that in certain parts of Europe they sold their children ? That part of Europe, he said,

said, was the city of Bristol; which trade was put a stop to by the Irish, in the reign of King Henry VII. who resolved to buy no more of the Bristol children, after a general calamity experienced by the Irish, and which they imputed as a judgment from Heaven, in token of its wrath on account of their traffic in children. The only thing he had, therefore, to solicit of the House, was to shew that they were now as much enlightened as the Irish were four centuries back, and refused to buy any more of the children or inhabitants of another country.

Mr Wilberforce adduced much farther argument to prove, that great advantages might be attained by a fair and honourable trading intercourse with Africa; after which he concluded by begging pardon of the House for having required their attention so long. He said, he could have expressed his conviction upon the business in a few words; he needed only for that purpose to have quoted a commandment from Holy Writ, "Thou shalt do no murder;"

“der ;” but he thought it his duty to lay the whole of the case and the whole of its guilt before them. He really believed they were not aware of its enormity and its extent till that moment, and insomuch they were not answerable for its having existed so long ; but, apprised of it as they now were, it behoved them to apply an adequate and immediate remedy. They would see that no mitigations, no palliatives would answer the purpose ; nothing short of an absolute abolition would do, and for that he should most strenuously contend. They owed it to Africa as much as to their own moral characters ; and he hoped they would follow up the principle of one of the repentant African captains, who had proved a voluntary witness, and make Africa all the atonement in their power for the multifarious injuries she had experienced at the hands of British subjects. He said, he had reduced the subject of which he had treated, to ten distinct propositions, which, when they spoke farther on the topic, he should be ready to support

support respectively by argument, and prove by evidence. Mr Wilberforce paid a very handsome compliment to the Slave-Trade Committee, who, he said, had laboured with the greatest assiduity to make the subject understood in all parts of the world; which, from its own power of interesting the human mind, had engaged men of all religions and opinions in its behalf. To call for any decision that evening, he said, would not be doing either the subject or the parties justice, nor using them candidly. He would therefore leave his propositions on the table for a few days consideration of all.

[Mr Wilberforce was on his legs three hours and a half.]

Lord *Penrhyn* said, at that late hour of the night it was impossible for him to attempt to answer the Hon. Gentleman. One thing, however, he could not help noticing then, and that was, that the Hon. Gentleman had misrepresented so many articles with regard

regard to the West Indies, in respect to its population, &c. that no reliance whatever could be placed on the picture he had chosen to exhibit. In two or three instances, where he had mentioned Mr Long, he had misquoted him, and overlooked many things essential to a fair state of the case. He did not mean to take up the time of the House then ; but when they should be called upon to vote the propositions they had just heard read, he should take the liberty of offering his observations upon them, and upon the whole of the argument of the Hon. Gentleman.

Mr *Gascoyne* said, he did not intend to go into a reply at that late hour. But there were some parts of the Hon. Gentleman's speech, which he would just notice. He meant the treatment of the Africans in their mid-passage to the West Indies, and the mortality of the seamen. He had been glad to hear, Mr *Gascoyne* said, that the whole of the propositions was

was grounded upon evidence to be found in the report of the Privy Council. He had read that report as carefully as possible, during the short time that had been allowed gentlemen to make themselves masters of it; and there was scarcely an assertion which the Hon. Gentleman had hazarded, that was not contradicted by respectable authority referred to in the report. The Hon. Gentleman had displayed great ingenuity as well as eloquence; and therefore, as there were other important witnesses besides those on whom the Hon. Gentleman had rested his facts, he had often been obliged to quote them, but never said much upon them. The Hon. Gentleman, he observed, had alluded to something which he said last year, and that was, that with any thing under two Africans to a ton, the trade could not go on. The fact was so; and if the Hon. Gentleman thought the bill of last year had produced no inconvenience, he was mistaken. If he were to see the number of sailors out of employ at Liverpool, and

and the quantity of ships laid up, he would not think the delegates had made a contradiction to what their witnesses had asserted at the Bar of the House. Mr Gascoyne said, he was glad to find that the Hon. Gentleman meant a fair unqualified abolition of the slave trade. He only wished that the Hon. Gentleman had at once come to the vote he mentioned. He had voted on the question of right with the Right Hon. Gentleman during the regency discussion; and this was a question which, like that, ought to be decided. He added, that he was persuaded that the slave trade might be made a much greater source of revenue and riches to this country, than as it stood at present. Mr Gascoyne concluded with expressing a hope, that the Hon. Gentleman would allow sufficient time for gentlemen to examine the calculations upon which he had grounded himself in many parts of his speech, and to try how far they were correct.

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Mr *Wilberforce* declared, he did not really know that in any instance whatever he had mistated any one fact; if he had done so, it would be easy to convict him out of the report upon the table. Sure he was, he did not mean to misrepresent any fact; he believed he had not done so; and that when the Noble Lord came minutely to compare his statement with the evidence afforded by the report, he would find he had been mistaken. With regard to the Hon. Gentleman who spoke last, supposing that he meant to charge the declaration, that less than two African slaves to a ton would be a losing adventure, as a charge that practice had contradicted, he meant no such thing: so far from it, he had argued it the other way, it being his decided opinion, that it was a losing trade and a lottery, which nothing but the spirit of speculation and adventure kept going. As to the giving time for examination of his calculations, as he meant the matter to be fairly and fully discussed, he had no objection to naming

Monday

Monday next for the Committee's sitting again.

Mr Burke said, he did not mean to detain the Committee but for a very few minutes. He was not able, if he had been inclined to it; but as from his other Parliamentary duty he might not have it in his power to attend the business in its course, he would take that opportunity of stating his opinion upon the subject. In the first place, he thought the House, the nation, and all Europe, under very great and serious obligations to the Hon. Gentleman, for having brought the subject forward in a manner the most masterly, impressive, and eloquent. Principles so admirably laid down, with so much order and force, were equal to any thing he had ever heard of in modern oratory; and perhaps it was not excelled by any thing to be met with in Demosthenes. A trade begun with savage war, prosecuted with unheard-of cruelty, continued during the mid-passage with the most loathsome imprisonment,

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and ending in perpetual exile and unremitting slavery, was a trade so horrid in all its circumstances, that it was impossible a single argument could be heard in its favour. On the score of prudence nothing could be said in defence of it, nor could it be justified by necessity ; and no case of inhumanity could be justified, but upon necessity ; but no such necessity could be made out strong enough to bear out such a traffic. It was the duty of that House, therefore, to put an end to it. If it were said, that the interest of individuals required that it should continue, that argument ought not to be listened to. Supposing that a rich man had a capital to a considerable amount lying by him, and every one, he observed, who had a large capital was a rich man, all capitals required active motion ; it was in their nature not to remain passive and unemployed : but if a large capital were employed in a traffic disgraceful to the nation, and shocking to humanity, it was the duty of that House to change its application, and, instead

instead of suffering it to be ill employed, to direct it to be employed in some trade, at once advantageous in its end, respectable in its nature, and useful to mankind. Nor was it any argument to say, the capital was already engaged in the slave trade; for, from its active principle, when taken out of that trade, it would soon find employment in another channel. This had been the case with the merchants and ship-owners of Liverpool, during the American war; the African trade was then almost wholly lost, and yet the ship owners of Liverpool had their ships employed either as transports in the service of Government, or in other ways. After descanting on this point for some time with great soundness of reasoning, Mr Burke said, he could have wished, with the Member for Liverpool, that the business might have come to a conclusion at once, without voting the propositions that had been read to them. He was not over-fond of abstract propositions: They were seldom necessary, and often caused great difficulty and embarrassment.

raffment. There was, besides, no occasion
 whatever, to assign detailed reasons for a
 vote, which upon the face of it sufficiently
 justified the House in coming to it. If
 the propositions should happen to be made,
 and not be carried in that House or the
 other, such a complication of mischiefs
 might follow, as would cause them heartily
 to lament that they ever were voted. If
 the ultimate resolution should happen to
 be lost, he declared, he was afraid the pro-
 positions would pass as waste paper. He
 reminded the Committee that it was ne-
 cessary to look farther than the present
 moment, and to ask themselves if they
 had fortified their minds sufficiently to
 bear the consequences of the step they
 were that night about to take. When
 they abandoned the slave trade, the Spa-
 niards, and some other foreign power,
 might possibly take it up, and clandestinely
 supply our West India islands with slaves.
 Had they virtue enough to see that, to bear
 the idea of another country reaping profits
 they had laid down, and to abstain from
 that

that envy natural to competitors in trade, so as to keep their virtue, steadily to pursue their purpose, and firmly to adhere to their determination? If so, let them thankfully proceed to vote the immediate abolition of the trade. But if they should repent of their virtue (and he had known miserable instances of such repentance), all hopes of future reformation would be lost; they would go back to a trade they had abandoned with redoubled attachment, and would adhere to it with a degree of avidity and shameless ardour, to their own humiliation, and to the degradation and disgrace of the nation in the eyes of all Europe. These were considerations well worth adverting to, before they took a decisive step in a business, in which they ought not to move with any other determination than to abide the consequence at all hazards. If they had virtue enough to act in that manner, they would do themselves immortal honour, and would see the abolition of the most shameful trade that ever the hardened heart of man could bear.

Viewing the trade, and all the circumstances of it with the horror, that the full view of it which the Hon. Gentleman had that day displayed could not fail to excite in the breast of every man not dead to sensibility, he blamed not the Hon. Gentleman for knocking at every door, and appealing to every passion, well knowing, as the Hon. Gentleman had forcibly and correctly said, that mankind were governed by their sympathies. There were other passions, however, to be regarded; men were always ready to obey their sympathies when it cost them nothing. Were they prepared to pay the price of their virtue? The Hon. Gentleman had said, the West India planters would have a compensation adequate to the loss incurred by the abolition of the Slave Trade. He believed they would: but how they would have instant compensation for what they would lose, he could not conceive. With their loss, their virtue would be greater. Having put this very forcibly, Mr Burke took notice

rice of the testimony of Admiral Barrington, who had said, he envied the condition of the negroes in the West India islands. The Hon. Admiral, he said, he should rather suppose, meant, that as he had fought so often bravely for his country, he was determined to fight again, rather than suffer his countrymen to be made slaves. If, however, he was to be taken literally, his sensation could only be accounted for by his having seen the negroes in the hour of their sports, when a sense of the misery of their condition was neither felt by themselves nor visible to others. Mr Burke reasoned on this with infinite knowledge of human nature, great nicety of discernment, and great truth of observation. Nothing, he said, made a slave happy, but a degraded man. In proportion as the mind grows callous to its degradation, and all sense of manly pride is lost, the slave feels comfort. In fact, he is no longer a man. If he were to define a man, Mr Burke declared, he would say with Skakespeare,

Man is a being, holding large discourse,
Looking before and after.

A slave was incapable of either looking before or after. Mr Burke, in this part of his speech, addressed Sir William Dolben (the Chairman) with the words, "to conclude, *My Lords*," which occasioning a loud laugh, Mr Burke, with great good humour and pleasantry, accounted for this slip of the tongue, by telling Sir William Dolben, that he had known men, who, sitting where he did, of no more merit than himself, had been elevated by things equally trifling, and so many people had been lately transplanted into the other House, that he could not help saying, "*My Lords*," by anticipation. To be serious again, he took notice of the reference which Mr Wilberforce had made to the evidence delivered at the Bar with so much ability by the late Mr Glover, (author of *Leonidas*) a gentleman who, as Mr Burke phrased it, had fortified the learned world with works, that would preserve his reputation to future ages.

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That Gentleman, he said, had told them at their Bar the probable mischiefs that the American would draw on their trade; and because, by a happy coincidence of circumstances, that mischief had not ensued to its full predicated extent, (a circumstance which had very happily disappointed his expectation) was the evidence of Mr Glover to be despised and ridiculed, and was such a man to be treated as a false prophet? After dwelling upon this for some few minutes, Mr Burke said, he would conclude as he had begun, with giving his hearty and sincere thanks to the Hon. Gentleman for his speech; and though he might not entirely approve of his mode of proceeding, he was ready to let him pursue his own mode, be that what it might, and to give him every possible support.

Mr Pitt said; though no question had been put that night, he could not help expressing his approbation of the Right Hon. Gentleman's sentiments, with almost every
one

one of which he cordially concurred; and when he differed at all, it was only as to those sentiments which the Right Hon. Gentleman had stated with respect to the mode of proceeding, and the propriety of coming to the several distinct propositions, which were the grounds of the ultimate vote for an unqualified abolition of the Slave Trade. He returned his Honourable Friend, therefore, his sincere thanks for the manner in which he had brought the subject before the House, not merely in regard to the masterly, forcible, and perspicuous method of argument that he had pursued respecting it, but particularly for having chosen the only way in which it could be made obvious to the world, that they were warranted in every ground of fact, and of reason, in coming to that vote, which he trusted would be the end of their proceeding. He was satisfied, Mr Pitt said, that no argument reconcileable to any idea of justice, could be given for continuing or carrying on the Trade in question; and he

he was perfectly clear that his opinion, at least the principles on which it was founded in his own mind, were totally unalterable ; yet he was ready to hear with the utmost candour and impartiality all the arguments that could be offered by those who, either from conviction, or from any other motive, entertained different sentiments ; being, from all the attention he had been able to pay the subject, (and he was far from the affectation of treating it lightly, or meaning to have it understood that he had not minutely investigated it) firmly persuaded, that nothing but the obscurity of general notions, unfathomed and unexamined, could have hitherto prevented all mankind, (those immediately interested in the question alone excepted) from agreeing in one and the same opinion on the subject. The real grounds of the proceeding, which he trusted and doubted not but that House would adopt, were stated distinctly in the propositions, which when put point to point, would be found to be such as no
people

people could venture to say *No* to, if they were not equally deaf to the language of reason and of undeniable fact. Let those propositions once be put upon the Journals of that House, and it was almost impossible for them to fail. Persuaded as he was of the policy as well as humanity of the measure, could he have ever entertained any doubt of its success, (and that, he thought, when the grounds of it were clearly ascertained and well understood, was not by any means to be expected) still that would not have deterred him from persisting in his purpose. As to the mode ultimately by which the Abolition of the Slave Trade was to be carried into effect, they were not at present to discuss it, but he trusted that it would not be found the means of inviting foreign powers to supply our Islands with Slaves by a clandestine trade; because, after a debt founded on the immutable principles of justice was found to be due, it was impossible but that the country had means to have it paid; and when once they had
come

come to a resolution to abolish the Slave Trade, they were not to be prevented by any fears of other nations being tempted by the profit resulting from a commerce, (which upon grounds of humanity and national honour they had abandoned) to carry it on in an illicit manner. Should that be the case, the language must be, that Great Britain had resources to enable her to protect her Islands, and prevent that traffic being clandestinely carried on with them, which she had thought it for her own honour and character to abandon. It was their duty, and it should be their ambition, to take the lead in a business of so much national importance, and so much national credit; and he declared, he could not but have great confidence that foreign nations would be inclined to share the honour; and that, if they were ready and willing to do so, they ought, on their part, for the sake of the general good that would result from such a measure being universally taken, to forego the honour in our favour, and to be

contented

contented to follow as our imitators in so excellent a work. He said, that if they were disposed to set about it in earnest, foreign nations might be invited to concur with them, either by negociation immediately to be commenced, or by the effect that the propositions being put upon their journals, would in all probability produce. Mr. Pitt added several other arguments, all tending to prove his firm opinion that the unqualified abolition of the slave trade, was the only step that ought to be taken.

Sir *William Yonge* declared he wanted no inducement to concur in the Hon. Gentleman's proposal, if founded in the truth of what he had brought forward ; but at the same time the Rt. Hon. Gentleman opposite to him must know, that if there were not great restrictions provided, there must be clandestine trade carried on, and then the sufferings of the Africans would be ten times greater than any they now felt, while the trade was legal. This Sir *William* explained, by stating the peculiar situation

situation of several of our islands, and the amazing hardships that the slaves must undergo, in consequence of numbers of them being crammed into the holds of small vessels, and kept there while the vessels were obliged to keep hovering round the islands, and watching an opportunity to effect a landing of their cargo. Sir William mentioned a point, of which the Hon. Gentleman who had opened the debate had taken no notice; and that was, the case of those who had lent money on mortgage upon the estates of the West India planters. The decrease of negroes on those estates would, he said, alter and decrease the value of the property of each; and consequently lessen the security of the mortgagees. He mentioned, that the Hon. Gentleman had stated that 15,000 slaves had been destroyed by the hurricanes in the island of Jamaica; and put the case, that a planter who had mortgaged his estate had ninety negroes, and a third of them were lost either by fevers, the small pox, or any other disease; in
that

that case the mortgagee would find his security so much altered, that he would naturally foreclose. Sir William thought it necessary to suggest these hints to the consideration of the Hon. Gentleman; declaring, however, that he was glad the Hon. Gentleman had brought the subject forward in the shape of distinct propositions, grounded upon evidence to be found in the report of the Privy Council.

Mr Fox said, he never had heard a debate with more satisfaction than the present. With regard to the plan of laying the propositions before the House, where he was agreed as to the substance of a measure, he did not like to differ as to the form of it. If, however, he differed in any thing, it was rather with a view to forward the business than to injure it, or to throw any thing like an obstacle or impediment in its way. Nothing like either should come from him. What he thought, was, that all the propositions were not necessary to be voted, previous to the ultimate vote, though

be had, Mr Fox said, he approved a palliative, because something like a remedy was better than no remedy at all: in the present case, an effectual remedy was not only more desirable, but it was much less difficult to be obtained than a palliative. He was glad that the propositions were to be put upon the journals, because if, from any misfortune, the business should fail, while it stood upon the journals, it might succeed another year: certain it was, it could not fail to succeed sooner or later. Foreign countries, when they heard that the matter had been discussed in that House, might follow the example, or they might go before us, and set one themselves. If this were to happen, though we might be the losers, humanity would be the gainer. Mr Fox reminded the House, that he had always been particularly sanguine, that whenever they examined the Slave Trade thoroughly, they would find it not only inhumane, but impolitic: from what the Hon. Gentleman, who had submitted the propositions to their consideration,

consideration, had said, it was clear, there was as little policy as humanity in the trade. But what he rose chiefly for, Mr Fox said, was to notice what had fallen from the right Hon. Gentleman respecting the probability of foreign nations assuming the Slave-Trade on our abandoning it, and in an illicit manner supplying our West India islands with slaves. He had intended to have risen to have said the very same thing, because he was convinced that it was the fit tone to be held on such a subject, and that foreign nations might be given to understand, that when this country thought proper to abolish the Slave Trade, we had resources among us to prevent that trade being carried on in any manner with our colonies. With regard to what the Hon. Gentleman, who spoke last had said, in declaring that a clandestine trade in slaves was worse than a legal one, he differed entirely. He thought such a trade, if it existed at all, should be only clandestine. A trade in human flesh was so scandalous, that it

was to the last degree infamous to let it be openly carried on by the authority of the Government of any country. Mr Fox said, he had sometimes been thought to use too harsh expressions of France in treating her as the rival of this country. Politically speaking, France certainly was our rival; but he well knew the distinction between political enmity and illiberal prejudice. If there was any great and enlightened nation now existing in Europe, it was France, which was as likely as any nation on the face of the globe, to act on the present subject with warmth and with enthusiasm; to catch a spark from the light of our fire, and to run a race with us in promoting the ends of humanity. France has been often improperly stimulated by her ambition: he had no doubt, she would in the present instance, readily follow its honourable dictates. He concluded with observing, that the business began auspiciously, and promised success.

Mr

Mr *Grenville* (the Speaker) said, he did not mean to argue the subject again, which had been reasoned upon so ably ; but he should not do justice to his feelings, if he did not express to the House, and to his Hon. Friend, the pleasure and the satisfaction he had received from one of the most masterly and eloquent speeches he had ever heard, a speech which could not fail to do honour to his Hon. Friend, and entitle him to the thanks of that House, of the People of England, of all Europe, and of the latest posterity. Mr Grenville thought a great advantage might be brought to the question from its being thoroughly discussed, and therefore he was peculiarly happy that his Hon. Friend had introduced the grounds of it in distinct propositions. With regard to our colonies, we were bound, Mr Grenville said, to assert our right, to prevent our islands from having; either directly or indirectly, any farther connection with a trade, which we had thought it our duty to abandon, as unfit to be carried on. That

was, as the Right Hon. Gentleman had termed it, the proper tone to assume to all Europe on such a subject; and it was besides proper to let our dominions know, that it was in that view we considered it.

Mr Alderman *Newnham* said, though he wished as well to the cause of humanity as any man, yet, as a representative of the city of London, he could not give his consent to a proposition, which, if carried, would fill the city with men suffering as much as the poor Africans. The Alderman conceived, that if wise regulations were applied to the Slave Trade, so as to cure it of the many abuses that he had no doubt prevailed in it, it might, he was sure, be made a source of revenue and material commercial advantage. If it were abolished altogether, he was persuaded it would render the city of London one scene of bankruptcy and ruin. Standing in the situation that he did in that House, he must suppress his feelings, and act upon motives of prudence. He therefore cautioned his

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Right Hon. friend below him (Mr Fox) and the Right Hon. Gentleman opposite to him, not rashly and precipitately to put an end to a trade, so essentially advantageous as a branch of our national commerce. Let the Right Hon. Gentlemen, the Alderman said, take care, that while they were giving way to the goodness of their hearts, they did not contribute to the ruin of the mercantile interests of their country.

Mr *Martin* said, as it had happened the other evening that the Right Hon. Gentleman's sentiments coincided with his own, so the Right Hon. Gentleman had just expressed himself to his heart's content, and said all *he* could have wished to have said. Mr Martin declared himself so well satisfied with what had been so ably stated by the Hon. Gentleman who introduced the propositions, that he was more proud of being an Englishman than he had ever been before. He was decisively for an unqualified abolition of the Slave Trade; and he flattered himself the policy would

be found to go along with the humanity of the measure. With regard to what had fallen from the worthy Alderman, he hoped the worthy Alderman was mistaken; that no such effects as he had predicted would take place in the city of London, but that the citizens had too much public spirit, to wish that a great national object should not take place, merely out of complaisance to the consideration of their private interests.

Mr *Dempster* said, There were petitions on the table, stating that private injuries would be felt to a considerable amount. He had therefore expected, that the first proposition the Hon. Gentleman would have come forward with, would have been a proposition to make good, out of the public purse, all the losses individuals were liable to sustain from an abolition of the Slave Trade. That ought, in his mind, to have been the preliminary step. He begged to ask, had the Hon. Gentleman any plantation of his own? Had the two Right
Hon.

Hon. Gentlemen any plantation? Undoubtedly they had not; neither had he any plantation. What right, then, had they to interfere with the interests of those who were planters? He did not like to be generous out of the pockets of others. It was recommended to them to abolish the Slave Trade on a principle of humanity: Undoubtedly they owed humanity to all mankind; but they also owed justice to those who were interested in the event of the question, and had embarked their fortunes on the faith of Parliament. The African trade had been considered by that House as so valuable, that they had preferred it to all others, and had annually voted a very considerable sum towards carrying it on. They had hitherto deemed it an essential nursery of our seamen, and had cherished it in consequence. Had it really been such as the Hon. Gentleman had represented it, our Ancestors would not have encouraged it any more than they; and therefore, upon these and other considerations, he could not help thinking,

thinking, that they should be wanting in
 their duty, if they abolished it altogether.
 Mr Dempster declared, that sugar could
 be raised much cheaper by freemen than
 by slaves, and that it was a well known
 fact, that it might. In illustration of
 this, he stated the various comparative
 prices of sugars in Batavia, in China, and
 in other parts of the East, in some of
 which it was cultivated by slaves, and in
 others by freemen. Having stated this
 distinctly, he said there was one other
 point that was material, and that was,
 our taking upon ourselves to provide for
 the West Indian planters, and to pronounce
 upon the means of cultivating their estates.
 The measure, in his mind, ought to have
 originated with them, and some petition
 should have been received from them
 stating what their sentiments were upon
 the subject, and praying the House to take
 measures accordingly. The House might
 if it pleased prevent any British subjects
 from becoming slaves; but they could not,
 with any pretence of right, prescribe to
 the

the Gentlemen of the West Indies by what hands their plantations should be cultivated. Mr Dempster repeated his assertion, that a commission of enquiry into the losses individuals concerned in the Slave Trade were likely to incur by the abolition of that trade, ought to issue as the first step to any future proceeding in the business; and when the losses were ascertained, that House should have proceeded to vote an adequate compensation.

Lord *Penrbyn* rose again, merely to prevent the Committee from going away with an idea, that sugar could be cheaply cultivated by freemen. The fact was, that no such thing was practicable. It had been tried and tried in vain. Notwithstanding the *reveries*, therefore, of the Hon. Gentleman who began the debate, that speculation must be abandoned. There were mortgages in the West India Islands, his Lordship said, to the amount of seventy millions. The question, therefore, was, if they passed the vote of abolition, they actually

ally struck at seventy millions of property, they ruined the colonies, and, by destroying an essential nursery for seamen, gave up the dominion of the sea at a single glance.

Mr *Smith* (Member for Sudbury) said, he could not state his concurrence with the propositions, without testifying his heartfelt satisfaction at the manner in which the Hon. Gentleman who opened the debate, if it could be called a debate, had treated the subject. Mr *Smith* gave Mr *Burke* or Mr *Fox* (we know not which) credit for his sentiments, and declared, that he really did not expect any other at his hands than those he heard from him. He cited a sentence coincident to one of the Right Hon. Gentleman's arguments of that day, from a pamphlet relative to the East Indies, written some years since, and desired to lay in his claim (when they were to discuss the business fully) to go into the assertions of the Noble Lord and the Hon. Gentleman, the other Member
for

for Liverpool. Considering the situation of those gentlemen, no men were more candid; but, as he did not feel any of those prejudices arising from connection, he wished the business to be fully examined, being satisfied that the more it was gone into, the more its total abolition would be found to be necessary and proper. He took notice of the various predictions of several Gentlemen, who had held out ideas of the mischievous consequences that would follow the abolition, and read an extract from a pamphlet published in 1781, by Stephen Fuller, Esq; which was apposite to the subject.

Mr *Pitt* rose again, not, he said, to discuss the subject a single moment: but, lest the House should go away with an idea that he acceded to the proposition of the Hon. Gentleman under the gallery, who had suggested the necessity of making a compensation for any losses that might be incurred by the people of Liverpool, or elsewhere, he thought it necessary to
state,

state, that he did not acquiesce in the idea, nor even, should the fact turn out, that any losses of the sort in question should be incurred, could he reconcile the listening to any claim of that kind, and giving a compensation, to any one principle of legislation.

Mr Alderman *Sawbridge* followed the line of argument adopted by his colleague Mr Alderman Newnham, and declared, he was not ready to say that it was expedient for this country to abolish the Slave Trade altogether. He thought, under wise and useful regulations, it might be rendered highly beneficial both to the commerce and the revenue of the country.

The Chairman was directed to report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

The House rose at ELEVEN o'clock,

Correct

Correct and authentic COPIES of the TWELVE PROPOSITIONS submitted on Tuesday evening by Mr Wilberforce, to the consideration of the Committee, to whom the Report of the Privy Council, various Petitions for the Abolition of the SLAVE TRADE, and other Papers relative thereto, had been referred; which Propositions were by consent ordered to ly on the Table.

I.

That the number of slaves annually carried from the coast of Africa in British vessels, is supposed to amount to about 38,000.

That the number annually carried to the British West India islands, has amounted to about 22,500, on an average of four years, to the year 1787, inclusive.

That the number annually retained in the said islands, as far as appears by the Customhouse accounts, has amounted, on the same average, to about 17,500.

II.

That much the greater number of the negroes carried away by European vessels, are brought from the interior parts of the continent of Africa, and many of them from a very great distance.

That no precise information appears to have been obtained of the manner in which these persons have been made slaves.

But that from the accounts, as far as any have been procured on this subject, with respect to the slaves brought from the interior parts of Africa, and from the information which has been received respecting the countries nearer to the Coast, the slaves may in general be classed under some of the following descriptions:

1st, Prisoners taken in war.

2d, Free persons sold for debt, or on account of real or imputed crimes, particularly adultery and witchcraft, in which cases they are frequently sold with their whole families, and sometimes for the profit of those by whom they are condemned.

3d, Domestic slaves sold for the profit of their masters, in some places at the will of the masters, and in some places on being condemned by them, for real or imputed crimes.

4th, Persons made slaves by various acts of oppression, violence, or fraud, committed either by the princes and chiefs of those countries on their subjects, or by private individuals on each other, or lastly by Europeans engaged in this traffic.

III.

That the trade carried on by European nations on the coast of Africa for the purchase of slaves, has necessarily a tendency to occasion frequent and cruel wars among the natives, to produce unjust convictions and punishments for pretended or aggravated crimes, to encourage acts of oppression, violence, and fraud, and to obstruct the natural course of civilization and improvement in those countries.

IV.

That the continent of Africa, in its present state, furnishes several valuable articles of commerce, highly important to the trade and manufactures of this kingdom, and which are in a great measure peculiar to that quarter of the globe: And that the soil and climate have been found by experience well adapted to the production of other articles, with which we are now either wholly or in great part supplied by foreign nations.

That an extensive commerce with Africa in these commodities, might probably be substituted in the place of that which is now carried on in slaves, so as at least to afford a return for the same quantity of goods as has annually been carried thither in British vessels: And lastly, that such a commerce might reasonably be expected to increase in proportion to the progress of civilization and improvement on that continent.

V.

That the Slave Trade has been found by experience to be peculiarly injurious and destructive to the British seamen who have been employed therein: And that the mortality among them

them has been much greater than in his Majesty's ships stationed on the coast of Africa, or than has been usual in British vessels employed in any other trade.

VI.

That the mode of transporting the slaves from Africa to the West Indies, necessarily exposes them to many and grievous sufferings, for which no regulations can provide an adequate remedy; and that in consequence thereof, a large proportion of them has annually perished during the voyage.

VII.

That a large proportion of the slaves so transported has also perished in the harbours in the West Indies, previous to their being sold: That this loss is stated by the Assembly of the island of Jamaica at about four and a half per cent. of the number imported; and is by medical persons of experience in that island ascribed in great measure to diseases contracted during the voyage, and to the mode of treatment on board the ships, by which those diseases have been suppressed for a time, in order to render the slaves fit for immediate sale.

VIII.

That the loss of newly imported negroes within the first three years after their importation, bears a large proportion to the whole number imported.

IX.

That the natural increase of population among the slaves in the islands, appears to have been impeded principally by the following causes.

1st, The inequality of the sexes in the importations from Africa.

2^d, The general dissoluteness of manners among the slaves, and the want of proper regulations for the encouragement of marriages, and of rearing children.

3d, The particular diseases which are prevalent among them, and which are in some instances attributed to too severe labour, or rigorous treatment, and in others to insufficient or improper food.

4th, Those diseases which affect a large proportion of Negro children in their infancy, and those to which the Negroes newly imported from Africa have been found to be particularly liable.

X.

That the whole number of the slaves in the island of Jamaica in 1768, was about . . . 167,000

That the number in 1774 was, as stated by Governor Keith, about . . . 193,000

And that the number in December 1787, as stated by Lieutenant-Governor Clarke, was about . 256,000

That by comparing these numbers with the numbers imported into and retained in the island in the several years from 1768 to 1774 inclusive, as appearing from the accounts delivered to the Committee of Trade by Mr Fuller, and in the several years from 1775 inclusive, to 1787 also inclusive, as appearing by the accounts delivered in by the Inspector-General, and allowing for a loss of about 1-22d part by deaths on ship-board after entry, as stated in the report of the Assembly of the said island of Jamaica, it appears, that the annual excess of deaths above births in the island, in the whole period of 19 years, has been in the proportion of about 7-8ths per cent. computing on the medium number of slaves in the island during that period. That in the first six years of the said nineteen, the excess of deaths was in the proportion of rather more than one on every hundred on the medium number. That in the last thirteen years of the said nineteen, the excess of deaths was in the proportion of about 3-5ths on every hundred on the medium number: And that a number of slaves, amounting to 15,000, is stated by the Report of the Island of Jamaica to have perished during the latter period in consequence of repeated hurricanes, and of the want of foreign supplies of provisions.

XI.

XI.

That the whole number of slaves in the Island of Barbadoes			
was in the year 1764, according to the account given in to	the Committee of Trade by Mr Braithwaite,	-	70,706
That in 1774, the number was, by the same ac-	count	-	74,874
In 1780, by ditto,	-	-	68,270
In 1781, after the Hurricane, according to the same	account.	-	63,248
In 1786, by ditto	-	-	62,119

That by comparing these numbers with the number imported into this island, according to the same account (not allowing for any re-exportation) the annual excess of deaths above births in the 10 years from 1764 to 1774, was in the proportion of about five on every hundred, computing on the medium number of slaves in the Island during that period.

That in the seven years from 1774 to 1780, both inclusive, the excess of deaths was in the proportion of about one and one-third on every hundred on the medium number.

That between the year 1780 and 1781, there appears to have been a decrease in the number of slaves of about 5000.

That in the six years from 1781 to 1786, both inclusive, the excess of deaths was in the proportion of rather less than seven-eighths in every hundred on the medium number.

And that in the four years from 1783 to 1786, both inclusive, the excess of deaths was in the proportion of rather less than one third in every hundred on the medium number.

And that during the whole period there is no doubt that some were exported from the island, but considerably more in the first part of this period than in the last.

XII.

That the accounts from the Leeward Islands and from Dominica, Grenada, and St Vincents, do not furnish sufficient grounds for comparing the state of population in the said Islands at different periods, with the number of slaves

which have been from time to time imported into the said Islands, and exported therefrom. But that from the evidence which has been received respecting the present state of these Islands, as well as of Jamaica and Barbadoes, and from a consideration of the means of obviating the causes which have hitherto operated to impede the natural increase of the slaves, and of lessening the demand for manual labour, without diminishing the profit of the Planter, it appears that no considerable or permanent inconvenience would result from discontinuing the farther importation of African Slaves.

TRANS.

TRANSLATION OF A LETTER

WRITTEN BY THE

Society of the Friends of the Negroes,

IN

F R A N C E,

TO THE

Different Bailliages, or Districts,

Entitled to send DELEGATES to the STATES-GENERAL,

GENTLEMEN,

AT the very time in which America shook off her servitude, the generous friends of liberty conceived that their cause would be degraded, if the slavery of the negroes received the sanction of law. A free man who holds slaves, or who approves of his countrymen holding them, either acknowledges himself guilty of injustice, or must assume as a principle, that liberty is only an advantage procured by force, not a right received

ved from nature. The abolition, therefore, of negro slavery, was esteemed by the General United States, and by the convention in which they were represented, not only a measure dictated by sound policy, but an act of justice required by humanity and honour. And indeed, how could they claim, without blushing, those declarations of right—those inviolable bulwarks of the liberty and security of the people, if they indulged themselves in the continual violation of their most sacred principles?—With what propriety could they talk of those rights, had they debased them into arbitrary conditions of mutual agreement, by shewing, in their conduct, that they did not think them intended for all mankind?

As the French nation is now busy in recovering rights, the exercise of which she has neglected, she will doubtless shew a spirit similar to that of the people whose cause she has espoused, to whom probably she owes a great part of her knowledge, and whose cool and steady wisdom (notwithstanding the difference of circumstances,

stances, of obstacles, and the proposed end) it were to be wished she would imitate. How can the nation protest against abuses, sanctioned by time, and established by legal forms, and urge against them the natural and unprescriptive rights of mankind, and the authority of reason, if she tolerates, by silence on the subject, so glaring a violation of reason and natural right, as the slavery of the negroes?

The Society of the Friends of the Negroes therefore trust, that the nation will consider the trade in slaves and slavery among the evils, the destruction of which they must resolve on, and prepare for; and they address themselves confidently to their countrymen, met to choose their representatives, to bring to their view these criminal customs, established by violence, sanctioned by law, and pleaded for by prejudice.

We know that there are abuses which cannot be remedied in a day, which being connected with political interest, or seeming to be so, are only to be done away with the precaution requisite to insure

sure the defireable object, and are not to be bought at too dear a rate ; and we do not request you to vote for the instant overthrow of such evils.

We now beseech you only to turn your attention to the sufferings of 400,000 men, consigned to slavery by treachery or force, condemned with their families to labour, without hope of release, exposed to the rigorous and arbitrary treatment of their masters, deprived of all the rights of nature, and of society, and reduced to the condition of domestic animals ; having only, like them, the interest of their owners for a pledge of their life and happiness.

We lay at your feet the cause of twenty nations, and of many millions of mankind, whose liberty, peace, manners, and virtues, have been these two hundred years sacrificed to the interests of commerce, and those interests probably ill understood.

We request you to insert in your instructions a special one, enjoining your deputies to require of the General States,

to

to consider of the means of *putting an end* to the Slave Trade, and of *preparing* for the abolition of Slavery; for it is too degrading to human nature to suppose, that such abuses can be necessary to the political existence and prosperity of a great nation—that the welfare of twenty-four millions of Frenchmen must be necessarily supported by the misery of 400,000 Africans;—or that nature has provided for men no means of happiness uncorrupted with the tears of men like themselves, and undefiled with blood. And we must be permitted also to wish, that France may have the honour of setting an example to the nations, which interest will soon oblige them to follow.

You may be told that this business is foreign to your purpose; but can any of the rights of justice and humanity be so to noble and feeling minds? The assertion, however, is deceitful.—What is opposed to those who wish to soften the hard lot of slaves?—Necessity—Policy—Custom. And are not necessity, policy, and custom, opposed to your own wishes,

H when

when you demand justice for yourselves ? Is it not your dearest interest to maintain that no custom, no prerogative, should stand against rights which have their foundation in nature itself ?—If you will condescend to look into books tending to apologize for slavery, or setting forth the difficulty of subverting it, you will perceive that the principles and concessions they contain, will equally justify every kind of tyranny, and every inroad on the rights of humanity.

We are not content with declaring slavery to be unjust, and the Slave Trade a source of crimes ; but we desire you to consider, whether in this question (as in many others) sound policy and justice do not go hand in hand ;—whether the very pecuniary interest of the nation does not require a change of principles and conduct, as much as the interests of humanity ;—and whether, as far as regards the abolition of the Slave Trade, this pecuniary interest does not require speedy and efficacious exertions, which it may be imprudent to delay.

We

We are accused of being enemies to the planters—we are enemies only of injustice—but we do say, that no man can by any means become another man's property :—We do not want to injure their possessions ; but we want to purify the source of their riches, and to render them innocent and lawful. In short, whilst we thus plead on behalf of the negroes, we speak the language of many planters, who are sufficiently well informed to perceive that our views are not contrary to their permanent interest, and sufficiently candid to assist us in a work, which has for one object the giving them the liberty to be humane and just.—We are, Gentlemen, your very humble, and most obedient servants,

The MARQUIS DE CONDORCET, *Pres.*

BREBAN, *Treas.*

GRAMAGNAC, *Secr.*

Resolved unanimously, at a General Assembly of the Society of the Friends of the Negroes, held at Paris, at the Hotel de Lussan, Rue Croix des petits Champs, the 3d February, 1789.

N. B. Many Bailliages have adopted this proposal, and have recommended the matter to the States General; and as there are several members of that respectable body, who are likewise members of the French Society, there is reason to believe that the business will meet with a favourable attention.

This, it is to be hoped, will annihilate the apprehensions which have been industriously excited in the minds of the public, that the French will take up the Slave Trade the moment the English relinquish it, which is one of the favourite arguments of the enemies of the abolition of the Slave Trade; but had it any solid commercial foundation (which it certainly has not) there is great reason to believe that the French nation has not, on principles of humanity, even the inclination to take the lead in this horrid commerce.

SOCIETY

SOCIETY AT EDINBURGH
 FOR THE PURPOSE OF EFFECTING THE
ABOLITION OF THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.

At a GENERAL MEETING held here this Day,

IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED,

That the following SUBSCRIBERS be appointed a COMMITTEE
 for conducting the Business.

Lord GARDENSTON, Chairman.

Sir WILLIAM FORBES, Baronet, Deputy Chairman.

Right Hon. Lord Napier

Rev. Prof. And. Hunter, D. D.

Rev. Prof. Wm. Greenfield

William Creech, Esq;

Adam Rolland, Esq;

Alex. Ferguson, Esq;

John Dickson, Esq; } Advocates.

John Erskine, Esq; }

John Campbell, Esq; }

Arch. Gibson, Esq; }

Arch. Fletcher, Esq; } Writers to the Signet.

Hor. Cannan, Esq;

ALEX. ALISON, Esq; *Treas.* CAMPBELL HALIBURTON, *Sec.*

SOCIETY-HALL, 6th February 1789.

THE following RESOLUTIONS being unanimously agreed to, as expressive of the sentiments of the SOCIETY, the same were ordered to be printed in the Edinburgh Newspapers, and also separately, for distribution.

1mo, THAT the SLAVE TRADE is, in its very nature, inconsistent with the first principles of justice and humanity, as well as a direct violation of the precepts of true Religion.

2do, THAT the injustice and inhumanity of this Traffic is greatly heightened, by the means used for procuring Slaves upon the Coast of Africa:—They are either kidnapped directly by the Europeans, or sold to them by native traders, who, on purpose to procure them, are guilty of every kind of violence and wrong.—The whole bonds of Society are broken to supply this trade; and Nations, naturally quiet and harmless, are disturbed with continual wars, for the sole purpose of making the captives slaves.

3to, THAT after the Negroes are thus purchased or kidnapped, and put on board the Slave-ships, the confinement there is so close, the crowd so great, and their treatment altogether so barbarous, that out of a hundred thousand annually carried away from Africa, near a fifth part die before they reach the market in the West Indies, and another fifth within the first year die of diseases contracted on ship-board, or of the seasoning fever.

4to, THAT when these our unhappy fellow-creatures are arrived in the West Indies, they are subjected to numberless severities and abuses, which, notwithstanding all the regulations made to the contrary, prevail, in many instances, to such a degree, as is a disgrace to any civilized Society.—The very laws made for the protection of Slaves, prove the truth of this assertion; and the insufficiency of these laws, proves that something further should be done.

5to, THAT the Slave Trade is not only inconsistent with justice and humanity, but is, in a very great degree, prejudicial to the British Nation in particular; because, contrary to the nature of every other foreign trade, instead of increasing, it diminishes considerably the number of our Seamen.

6to, THAT for these reasons, this Society are resolved to concur with the London Society, and others instituted with similar views, in using every means of bringing this great and important subject under the consideration of Parliament; and while our fellow-subjects in England (so deservedly distinguished throughout the world for their humanity and love of liberty) are making such vigorous exertions, it is hoped, that in this part also of the United Kingdoms, the Friends of Liberty will give their hearty countenance and support.

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(Signed) F. R. A. GARDEN.

NAMES of SUBSCRIBERS, and SUMS
SUBSCRIBED, for DEFRAISING the
EXPENCES laid out upon the SLAVE
TRADE.

			L.	s.	d.
Lady Abercrombie	—	—	1	1	0
Mr Patrick Alifon of Newhall	—	—	1	1	0
Mr Alexander Alifon of Excise	—	—	1	1	0
James Balmain, Esq;	—	—	1	1	0
Mr John Buchan, Writer to the Signet	—	—	1	1	0
Mr John Balfour jun. of Felrig	—	—	1	1	0
Right Honourable Lord Balgonie	—	—	2	2	0
Mr John Campbell, Writer to the Signet	—	—	1	1	0
James Cheape, Esq;	—	—	1	1	0
Mr Horatius Cannan, Writer to the Signet	—	—	1	1	0
Rev. John Colquhoun, Leith	—	—	0	10	6
D. C.	—	—	0	10	6
Mrs Campbell of Southall	—	—	1	1	0
Rev. Dr Dalrymple, Ayr	—	—	2	2	0
John Dickson, Esq; Advocate	—	—	1	1	0
Mr Alexander Donaldson, Printer	—	—	1	1	0
Rev. Dr Erskine	—	—	1	1	0
Mr John Erskine, Advocate	—	—	1	1	0
James Farquharson, Esq;	—	—	2	2	0
Francis Farquharson, Esq;	—	—	1	1	0
Mr Archibald Fletcher, Writer to the Signet	—	—	1	1	0
Mr James Ferrier, Writer to the Signet	—	—	1	1	0
Mr Peter Forrester, Merchant	—	—	1	1	0
Alexander Ferguson, Esq;	—	—	1	1	0
Sir William Forbes, Baronet	—	—	5	5	0
Mr Farquharson of Bruxy	—	—	1	1	0
Rev. Mr Finlay of Polmont	—	—	0	10	6

Carry over L. 34 2 6

	L.	s.	d.
Brought over	34	2	6
Lord Gardenston	—	20	0 0
Mr Robert Gillespie, Craigmiller	—	1	1 0
Mr Archibald Gibson, Writer to the Signet	—	1	1 0
Alexander Gordon, Esq; Greenlaw	—	1	1 0
Rev, Dr Hunter	—	2	2 0
Mr Andrew Hamilton of Excise	—	1	1 0
John Lamont, Esq;	—	1	1 0
From a Lady	—	0	5 0
Mr A. Mackenzie, Writer to the Signet	—	1	1 0
Sir William Murray	—	2	0 0
Lord Napier	—	2	2 0
Miss Pitcairne, Canongate	—	1	1 0
Adam Rolland, Esq; Advocate	—	1	1 0
Rev. Thomas Randall	—	1	1 0
Mr Walter Scott, Writer to the Signet	—	1	1 0
Lady Stewart of Allanbank	—	1	1 0
Mr Stewart of Allanbank junior	—	1	1 0
Mr John Tawse	—	1	1 0
Mr John Thomson of Excise	—	1	1 0
Mr Thomas Trotter, Merchant	—	0	10 6
Mr Wauchop of Edmonston	—	1	1 0
Rev. Mr Walker	—	1	1 0
Mr Robert Watt	—	0	10 6
Mr Robert Young	—	1	1 0

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Total at 26th May 1789 L. 79 9 6

Further Donations will be received by

Messrs MANSFIELD, RAMSAY, and Co.

Sir WILLIAM FORBES, Sir JAMES HUNTER, and Co.

Messrs BERTRAM, GAIRDNER, and Co., Bankers;

And by

ALEXANDER ALISON of the Excise, Treasurer to the Society;

And WILLIAM CREECH, Bookseller.